

197
191 mutually intelligible. The speech differences are so great that even two neighboring villages have noticeable dialectical variations. Japanese is the second language.

[601]
[177] Okinawan is spoken in almost all households. The first words learned by the child from his mother or others around him are Okinawan. The child is praised or scolded in Okinawan; he learns Okinawan terms for numbers, names for plants, tools, and other implements used around the house. A curious exception in this pattern is the use of kinship terms. Taira children start using Japanese kinship terms in infancy with one exception—in some families the grandmother is addressed by the Okinawan term.

[648] Knowledge of the Okinawan language is said to have been helpful to Americans during the war in distinguishing the local people from Japanese. Japanese has been the official language in Okinawa for over 60 years. It is taught and used in schools exclusively until the upper grades, when foreign languages are introduced. Everybody who has gone to school learns Japanese, and only the oldest persons in Taira speak Okinawan exclusively.

197
802
191 Young children, even though they learn to speak Okinawan first, soon pick up Japanese words and phrases. While their Okinawan vocabulary is limited to everyday experiences, the child's horizon is widened gradually by the use of Japanese terms. First formal efforts to teach Japanese are made in kindergarten, and teachers quickly succeed in eliminating the use of Okinawan in class. Even in play groups of school-age children, Japanese is usual. Children frequently censure each other for occasional slips or shifts to Okinawan.

191
197 Taira adults vary in the use of language. Simple, routine matters in daily living are mostly discussed in Okinawan. This language is also predominant in small, informal social gatherings and in emotionally tense situations, such as domestic quarrels. Furthermore, the priestess and her assistants conduct all religious ceremonies in Okinawan. People resorted to Okinawan in our presence when they did not want to be understood. On the other hand, village meetings and gatherings of village leaders or visits of teachers and other officials are conducted in Japanese.

THE PEOPLE

142 The majority of the Taira people are of short, stocky build, with heavy bones. Their hair growth is strong, their skin dark. A light skin

418 Six Cultures: Studies of Child Rearing

625 went out for fugitives from the south, he would accompany the police-
[632] mar or investigate himself. In cases of death, both he and the police-
[647] mar have to make a report.

[575] The Young People's Association may serve as a vigilante in emer-
[731] gencies such as fires, floods, tornadoes, and other disasters. When a
military jeep was reported to have been stolen near Naha and driven
on the dead-end road running north, the young people in all villages
on the way erected road blocks and were ready to help catch the thief.
The group would act together in a similar fashion at any threat from
outsiders.

622 The headman can only enforce local ordinances insofar as he is
681 able to persuade people to comply. He is not concerned directly with
[625] crime or disturbance of the peace. Exceptions are such matters as steal-
ing sugar cane or letting chickens run loose so that they enter every
yard. For such acts, money fines can be imposed. One warden still has
a tag which used to be given to the man whose chickens ran around
freely. The offender had to pay the fine and keep the tag until he de-
tected someone else's chicken running loose. Then he could pass the
tag on to that person. Such measures are no longer used. But the un-
derlying principle of public censure and fear of ridicule continues to
operate in village social control.

623 Public censure is used along with fines to ensure attendance at vil-
626 lage meetings. Roll call is taken before each meeting so that the ab-
[681] sence of individuals is made known to the whole group. Similarly, when
tax collections became more and more delinquent, it was decided to
have ward meetings in which everybody would be reminded in public
to pay his share. Those who were unable to do so would have to state
their reasons. As soon as this new plan was announced, several people
got up during the meeting to pay outstanding amounts to the head-
872 man. The school uses similar devices to achieve better attendance and
scholarship. During home visit week, about once a year, a meeting is
held for all parents and the statistics for attendance for each village
are read as well as scholastic performances for each community.

INFORMAL CONTROL

156
626 What other people might think is uppermost on everybody's mind.
[867] Children are reminded by their mothers not to play alone lest people
would think they are unpopular. They are told not to fight lest others
think badly of them or make them responsible for the consequences.
Censure by gossip is common, but criticism is seldom made directly to
a person's face, and the target of extensive gossip is often unaware of it.

Taira: An Okinawan Village 419

An exception to this was the case of a junior high school girl who left her mother and stepfather and went to live in the city. The incident was known to all villagers within a short time, and gossip was rife, but referring to the case directly in the presence of the mother was avoided. When the mother finally heard the gossip, she contended that the story had been circulated by a certain family, singled out the woman of that house (who happens to be one of the few Christians in Taira) and told her in no uncertain words that she, as a Christian who wants to do good and others to be good, should know better than to spread evil gossip. 626 156

Concern with the affairs of other villagers is, of course, a result of the general intimacy between people. Not only one's immediate family but also anyone in Taira is aware of what happens to others in the community, and the right to such knowledge of private and family matters does not seem to be denied by anybody. People ask and receive answers, and news travels rapidly from one house to another. In considering the fear of censure and its effectiveness in social control, however, one should not forget that, conversely, the concern of others for one's life leads to a feeling of belonging and the expectation of help and affection.

Children are part of the gossip channel in that they are talkative and report news. They do not seem to invent malicious stories but do join in fun making at other people's expense. [867]

Being too malicious is censured. Older people still remember that they heard in their youth about old wicked women who could bring a curse on others. The term for curse still connotes a person who is disliked or who snoops excessively in other people's affairs. [754]

If possible, nobody is deliberately made subject to public exposure in case of wrongdoing. A township official, who by virtue of his office was also a member of the village council, showed little interest and responsibility toward the community. When the village meeting deliberated whether township officials should continue to be made members of the village council, his name was not mentioned, although the case was discussed at length in public. The final decision was to give him another chance. This, too, is characteristic of community behavior. Ostracism and complete rejection of serious offenders against the community would be a most serious punishment. This in itself would give the community a bad standing. A common front toward the outside is preferred, so that all drastic actions are left only for extreme cases. Rather, one tries to get along, even with a deviant person. Individuals between whom disagreement exists act friendly toward each other in public. 626 627 156

A deep sense of mutual obligation and duty not only toward imme- 626 156

- 626 diate relatives but also toward members of the entire community, and
 156 even certain strangers, appears in many contexts. Any villager feels
 [479] a sense of obligation to participate in mutual assistance, and someone
 who fails to live up to this obligation is severely criticized. A person
 who commits a crime is said to have no feeling of obligation, and it
 seems clear that the infrequency of transgression, either the violation
 of mutual help codes or more serious infractions, is held in check by
 fear of censure.

626 The Japanese moral code, which stresses obligations and feelings of
 577 indebtedness and gratitude toward those from whom favors have been
 867 received, is obviously related to such social control forces or is in fact
 [177] identical with them. Japanese ethical training was part of school train-
 ing before World War II, and it is still deeply valued and followed.
 [571] That any close-knit community tends to foster such forces of control is
 common knowledge. Yet the positive attitude toward obligations and
 their elaboration in interpersonal relationships is noteworthy and char-
 acterizes an important aspect of Taira life. It is learned early, as we
 found out when one mother said about her 4-year-old daughter: "She
 understands the idea (of obligations and indebtedness), although she
 does not know the concepts." When the family receives a gift, the
 little girl asks, "Shall we take some fish (a counter present) to them?"
 In spite of the positive value mentioned, there seem to be few com-
 pulsions connected with obligations. Actions appear spontaneous rather
 than forced. Of course, these obligations are of importance in deter-
 mining contributions of individual households at weddings, funerals,
 and other occasions where interpersonal ties are cemented.

*
 *
 *

Chapter 6

Social Organization

- 571 In every society an individual belongs to a number of groups, over-
 lapping in membership and differentiated by function. A resident of
 Taira is no exception. Some groups are open, that is to say, new mem-

829 considered the initiator of all action. Frequently there are complaints of high taxes, criticisms of certain policies, and dissatisfaction with certain officials, but the authority of a government to undertake any course it chooses would never be challenged. There does not exist any concept of a limit to obedience or to the powers of government.

7. Social Control

626 The mechanisms of social control within an Okinawan village are not easily observed or studied since they are so rarely overt. One is impressed from the outset by the homogeneous character of the community, a natural outcome of the common experience and cultural heritage which all the members have shared. The average villager has had a limited range of contacts during the course of his or her lifetime, imposed to no small degree by the all-consuming demands of subsistence agriculture. Minorities within the community rarely exist, and where they do, they are not recognized as such, for this homogeneity, in addition to being an actuality, is insisted upon as a cultural ideal. Consequently great stress is placed on presenting a united front to the outside. Within the community aggressive behavior is not tolerated and so great is the fear of rift through discord that few official acts are initiated without first securing informal concordance; consequently, formal political meetings are most often marked by unanimity and agreement. In enlisting the support of the villagers for a given project or proposed line of action leaders most frequently appeal to group solidarity, stressing the values of cooperation.

As is so often found in small communities where all the members have a face-to-face relationship, the chief mechanisms of social sanction are ridicule, censure, and the threat of ostracism. The small size and homogeneous nature of the Okinawan village limits the individual's behavior to a rather narrow and inflexible standard. The individual, however, must consider his actions not only in terms of the reactions of others to him but also in terms of the consequences for his family. Under the old kingdom the family was legally responsible for the actions of its members, and at the present time an individual is officially registered as a member of a certain family and is always thought of by the villagers in association with that family. One's mistakes as well as one's achievements reflect upon the other members of the family and are shared by them. This emphasis on family and community over the individual serves markedly to curb individualism and to further the homogeneity of the society. Conformity and honoring one's obligations are the major cultural values. The surrogate for this strong cultural deemphasis of the individual is provided by a close ego identity with the family and community and by the security which they offer in return. The severest sanction which can be applied is expulsion of the individual from his group.

8. Local Autonomy

642 On a small island with a highly centralized government there is little room for local autonomy. Most action is initiated in the higher echelons of government and is unquestioningly obeyed at the lower levels. There